

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH  
MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JONES, COMMANDING GENERAL, COALITION  
POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ

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MODERATOR: We could -- why don't we just go ahead and get started, and  
then as the others dial in, they can join us and we'll move forward.

So Colonel Johnson, if General Jones is ready, we can begin.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, go ahead.

GEN. JONES: Okay, well, good afternoon everybody, I guess, or maybe it's  
good morning your time, I suppose. The first thing is, very happy to be with  
you for a short while. I'll make some comments up front. Hopefully that will  
stimulate a couple of questions or two.

I've been commander of CPATT now for four months, tomorrow in fact, and --  
welcome, ever who it is that just joined us.

Q Phil Avellino (ph). Sorry for my--

GEN. JONES: No problem. And then of course I had a previous tour here  
back there in the '05 time frame.

First of all what I'd like to do is just start off talking a little bit on  
the challenges the MOI is facing to get some context for what we'll talk about.  
Because as I've been here I have been studying this problem, trying to  
understand why the challenges are the way they are.

First element is the really unprecedented growth of any organization I've ever worked with. If you look at the Ministry of Interior, it's grown about 450 percent in the past four years, which is remarkable growth for any organization. In the -- as I thought about it I tried to imagine if this was the U.S. Army. And if they had grown at the same rate with the active duty force that MOI has grown, we'd have an active force of over two million people.

And as I thought about what the challenges would be, it seemed to me we'd have a huge problem with facilities, equipment, training, the processes that we use, shortage of leaders, and a whole bunch of other things.

And frankly as I've studied the MOI they have all those problems. And so it's not surprising to me that they have them, when you look at the rate of growth that they've had since we've been here.

But in addition to that there are some other challenges. Of course you have the mid-level management of the ministry that when we came into the country pretty much had a mass exodus because of the de-Ba'athification business.

You also have a multiparty system where political appointees aren't from all the same political party, but they actually are from several different ones. What that means is that there are going to be some frictions that occur just because they are not people who help each other work together and so forth like you have in a system similar to ours.

And then we also have kind of a change in what the expectation of the ministry is, in that before we came here, the Ministry of Interior and the police forces were not really in charge of internal security of the country. It was really the military, the special groups, Republican Guard, the Fedayeen, and other kinds of people who really were in control of internal security of the country, and the police were kind of fourth and fifth fiddle to the others. And now they are getting the responsibility to move into the first fiddle role.

So those--all of those things combined with an environment where intimidation and violence has -- has been party of everyday life for many of the people in the ministry makes it pretty challenging for them.

Additionally all the challenges that there are in government in terms of the other ministries end up affecting the ministry of interior, and the things like the Ministry of Finance and Electricity. Any time they don't function very well, it ends up having an effect on the Ministry of Interior.

So it's a very very difficult environment. It's a tough situation working -- (audio break) -- police forces have been put in. And what I find fairly remarkable, having gone away for a couple of years and then come back, that they have made really some progress. So things like recruiting remains strong. They're continuing to generate forces and equip those forces. They are beginning themselves to contract for equipment, and take on some institutional functions that up to now they've been completely dependent on the coalition for.

And they are incrementally assuming responsibility for training and life support, things that we have been doing for them.

The last thing I'll mention is, they are making some progress in ministerial capacity as well. Everything from starting to reorganize the ministry to be more functional, to creating an internal affairs organization

that is investigating corruption and allegations of -- (audio break) -- sectarianism.

They have an instructor general program that is growing and starting to have effect. They have a functioning pay system where they pay all of their folks. We are not involved in that anymore. And they have made a tremendous effort at national police reform that we're seeing have significant effects.

And a whole lot of other things that I won't spend much more time on.

Now having said all that, again, I don't want to paint a picture that says that -- that this work is done, or close to being done. Again you look at the challenges they're facing institutionally as an organization. They are absolutely -- (audio break). And I don't think any organization in the world could get their hands around these problems rapidly. It's going to take some time and a lot of effort.

And quite frankly there are enemies who don't want this to be successful, and are working pretty hard to make it fail. And that includes some players on the inside of the country, and then clearly what we've seen in the past some players from external to the country trying to do the same thing.

So it's going to be some hard, tough work. But I'm fairly impressed, the willingness and the effort that the ministry is making to tackle the problems and to bring them to a resolution.

So with that as kind of just a scene setter, by happy to answer questions.

MODERATOR: All right, so thank you very much. Jared, you were first online, so why don't you get us started.

Q Great. Thank you, Lieutenant Fishman. We heard earlier about the training from the Carabinieri which should be I guess part of the elite part of the Iraqi policy. So perhaps you could touch on that, and then also the wider issue of training for the force. How looking towards the future are we going to ensure that everybody is well trained, that they are all on the same page, and that we can kind of instill the values in the recruits, in the policemen, that we want to? So if you could talk about kind of the micro and the macro on that, please sir.

GEN. JONES: Okay. First of all, let me start with the Carabinieri training. What they are doing is, they're bringing one battalion of the national police at the time into a camp that we have here that is specifically for this. They are taking them through the almost couple month course in order to do two major things.

One is to train on the higher level skills that the Carabinieri are pretty good at. The second, and probably the most important is, to focus very much on leader development. And that is leaders doing things that in our military and our forces we kind of take for granted. But to have them take on more -- or I should say larger roles in detailed planning; larger roles in taking care of their people and in checking on things to make sure there's compliance with basic standards and all that kind of thing.

So the end result is a unit that comes out of the Carabinieri training that is much more professional in terms of its skills, but it's also much more advanced in terms of its leadership skills.

So that's kind of that in a nutshell. In terms of the overall issue of training, we have a couple of things going on. First of all, we are -- (audio break) -- the Iraqis with an expansion of their training base. We have a significant portion of the force that has been hired but only given what I would call the minimum amount of training. A short course to ensure that they are safe, and they understand the basics of how to handle their weapons and so forth.

And third, going to a police academy for training, because there was a need just to get more policemen out on the street, assisting in the security situation.

So there is a backlog of people that need to go to the academy, and we are helping the Iraqis expand their training academy capacity in order to make sure everyone is trained.

In terms of how we're doing that, how CPATT assists, we -- (audio break) - - training academy has stood up, we have a very active role in training ourselves using interpreters and so forth, as well as helping Iraqis train. But as we get an academy stood up, and now that we are standing up new academies, we're more focused on training the trainer, in order to get Iraqis prepared to conduct the training themselves.

And what happens is that as an academy matures we change our focus from conducting training to ensure that the trainers are trained, and then helping the academy leadership supervise the training to make sure that it's being done standard.

And so we sort of moved more into the background as advisers, and coaches, of the people doing the training, as opposed to doing it ourselves. So that's kind of how we're trying to do the quality of training to ensure that it stays high.

The last thing is that, in terms of professionalizing the force, is we're building this capacity. And a couple of other things that we are working on with the Iraqis is their leadership development program, where in the -- in the old method you basically went to an academy, you became a policeman, and then that was the last training you really ever had.

We think that there is a good reason to go back and give them more advanced training, even for the basic policemen, and then certainly more advanced leadership training for all the people that are in leadership positions. And the same thing for the officers; after they finish the basic officers' academy, to then come back for more advanced training as officers. That's something else that we are encouraging the Iraqis to develop and to implement.

I hope that answers the question.

MODERATOR: All right, sir, thank you very much.

Ward. Ward, are you still with us?

Q Yeah, I'm here, Jack. Hi, General. Ward Carroll -- (audio break) - - military.com, and defense dot org, thanks for talking to us today.

I'd like to sort of -- (inaudible) -- on what Jerry was talking about, and maybe make it a little easier to answer. I think you have framed your challenges well. But would you say your way forward is event driven, or is it time driven? And if it's event driven, what event or series of events would lead to mission complete?

GEN. JONES: I wouldn't say that it is event driven or time driven. I would -- I think the phrase everybody uses is condition based, and it's a variety of conditions.

The first thing is the ability for the Iraqis to do force generation on their own. And they are making progress to that end, and in terms of assuming life support contracts, trainers that are actually conducting the training and so forth. So they are making progress there.

Their ability to operate with systems that work in the field, and by that I mean at -- (audio break) -- station level, at district level, and so forth, the systems to fix their equipment, to fuel it, to do their own local training, to do their supply procedures, to do the proper arrests and management of the normal police activities in their station or their district.

You know those kinds of functional things is another thing that they have to do. That's on the operational end of this. And the core is more focused on that than CPATT is, but that's one of the important elements.

And then there are two other key elements. One is the institutional performance that has to occur. And some of those areas, they have come quite a ways on. For instance, as I mentioned, they already pay themselves completely. There is no coalition involvement in the payment of policemen, or other folks in the MOI. And that's about a 350,000 person payroll right now, so that is a fairly significant complex effort.

But other things like the logistic side that they are ordering, for instance, their own equipment in some cases. I know that a noteworthy event in the media back at home over the fact that they are contracting to buy some Chinese weapons. And it was actually -- sort of had like a negative connotation to it, which surprised me a little bit, because I thought it was a real positive development that they are using their money based on their initiative to buy weapons that they need, I think that's a good thing frankly because it's really part of the institutional functions that we are trying to encourage, and a whole lot of other things in terms of what institutions should do, and capabilities the institution should have, for instance in the forensics arena or those kinds of things.

And then the last thing is, the professionalism of course has to develop. And that's a combination of the ability to do internal review, investigations, disciplining people and that kind of thing.

There is a law pending in the legislature right now in the council of representatives that we think will pass relatively soon that is kind of the uniform code of military justice, equivalent, for the police forces that will give them the ability to discipline their own people for infractions that they make against the MOI policy or procedures or whatever.

But that will be very helpful in helping them professionalize their force. So I would say that as the Iraqis develop capabilities for force generation, to conduct their operations without assistance, and to perform as an institution,

as that continues to occur, you will see our assistance requirement continue to go down.

And in terms of trying to predict that on a timeline, you all know that, number one, we generally don't do that; number two, based on how dynamic the situation is here, I think it would be kind of a futile effort anyway.

MODERATOR: Okay, all right, and Bill.

Q Hi, General, this is Bill Artileno (ph) with the Long War Journal and NDC (ph) Journal. I embedded with the Fallujah police and their -- (inaudible) -- adviser twice in January and September, and a consistent complaint even after security improved was that the police couldn't get supplies and other, just, you know, logistical support from MOI, from the provincial government through MOI.

And you've already mentioned a lot of the factors. But all the -- you know the locals there assumed that it was all because, you know, of sectarian interest; that they were on the short end of the stick.

So can you assign like relative weight to how much of the -- the holdup in getting this type of stuff out to local cops is based on, you know, administrative inefficiency, and corruption, versus a concerted effort by certain players within the Iraqi national government to sort of withhold funds and resources from Sunni competitors?

GEN. JONES: Sure. I would tell you that in extremely small amounts, if any -- I haven't seen any evidence of it, but I've heard it's extremely small -- is -- (audio break) -- is caused by the overt denial of -- (audio break) -- some equipment or ammunition or something like that.

I will -- here what I have to -- (audio break) -- and again, if you look at--

Q Sir, you're cutting out. You said that an extremely small percentage of what?

GEN. JONES: An extremely small percentage, and in fact I haven't seen it occur at all in the four months I've been here, but an extremely small percentage of equipment shortages would be attributed to some sort of deliberate effort to deny somebody something.

Q Okay.

GEN. JONES: Here's what I see as the fundamental issues. And I'll talk about al Anbar specifically, just as a for instance. When I arrived here, al Anbar authorization was 11,000 policemen in al Anbar. In the first month I was here, it increased from 11,000 to 20,000.

In the subsequent months it's been increased again up to 24,000. Now, I just have to tell you that any organization that makes decisions to grow in that -- that amount just when you look at how fast you can hire people, then you look at the order to shift time of weapons and ammunition and equipment, you are going to have huge problems when that occurs.

When we first started this endeavor, I can't remember the exact number, but I believe we thought the police force would be something like 185,000 folks

in the MOI, maybe it's 195,000. As I said before, when you look at all the folks that are now part of the MOI, they are up to 355,000 folks. And frankly, they have huge shortages of equipment across the board.

In al Anbar, shortages are very similar to the shortages that all of the provinces have. They are all in the 30-some-odd percent range on many pieces of equipment. And -- a little higher, but less than 50 percent on others. And so -- and that's based on their authorizations. Not all of them have actually been able to hire and train up to their authorizations yet. Again, it is growing very rapidly.

The other specific thing -- and again, I go back to this business of having relatively inexperienced bureaucrats in the -- in the forces -- and that is, there are procedures that you have to follow to order equipment or just to do basically everything. When you look at the volume of procedures that you have in an institution, to have inexperienced people try to suddenly start filling senior roles in that institution with these practices that are not well known, and in some cases not well documented, it creates -- it creates big challenges.

So in some cases in al Anbar what we've had to do is help educate or train the police leadership in order to help ease some of the friction that occurs bureaucratically in any institution in order to help them to get things done.

Q Right.

GEN. JONES: So I would attribute it more to those issues than any kind of deliberate effort to deny folks equipment or facilities or anything like that.

Q Okay.

MODERATOR: All right. Did anyone else join us?

(No audible response)

MODERATOR: Okay, do we have any follow up questions?

Q Yeah, Jack, Bruce McQuain. And I'm sorry about that; sorry I was late.

General, Bruce McQuain with QandO. I was struck by your statement that MOI, the MOI had undergone a 450 percent growth rate, and obviously that is going to create a lot of turbulence and a lot of problems as you pointed out.

I guess my question is a two-parter, is, do you think they're where they need to be now? Or do you see further growth in that area? And if they are where they are supposed to be or should be now, when can we expect the seasoning of the bureaucrats I guess is the best way to say it to be to the point where they can really take control of this force?

GEN. JONES: In terms of, are they about where they need to be, they have a five-year plan that calls for continued growth. That's based on some assumptions about the security environment. Of course it's very hard to predict.

I would tell you that based on where they are likely to be at the end of 2008, that if the security situation changed and you didn't have the kind of

conflicts that you have right now, that it's conceivable that could be adequate.

On the other hand if the enemy continues to be determined, and continues to try to disrupt the security environment here, I can foresee, and they are planning for further growth.

But of course that's a decision. You can plan -- you plan for it now, but you don't necessarily have to execute it if the security situation changes.

In terms of when will the bureaucrats have the skills necessary, what I would tell you is that it -- there isn't any, you know, specific date where suddenly they are going to have skills. You see it developing in pockets here and there. If you went down to the logistics directorate with General Abdul Amir (ph), and you sat down like I've done, and you looked at his accountability system for weapons, where he can tell you every weapon that has come in since January, he can tell you by serial number exactly where that number is. He's got it on his computer; he can look it up; he can tell you individual weapons, you know, the individual and the badge number, and the station that that individual is located at.

He is a bureaucrat that's figured it out, and is doing quite well, and he's doing it without any assistance from us at this point, and he's just driving on continuing to develop his logistics system.

In other areas like strategic planning, certain budgeting, contracting, higher level policing skill functions like forensics and things like that, they still are going to have to have a considerable amount of assistance while they develop the technical skill and the bureaucratic skill to be able to manage those.

And when that is, I would just tell you, is so unpredictable that I -- I don't have really a very good estimate. And I know that is not a very satisfying answer, but again, when you are here, those of you who have been here, and you know how dynamic the situation is, the guys who made the time estimates of how long it would take al Anbar to become a relatively peaceful province, if you'd talked to them last January they would have told you a decade, but if you -- I think it was Bill that said he was out in Fallujah recently, I think he'd tell you that the environment has changed remarkably, and no one would have predicted it could have happened that fast.

Q I predicted it. No, I'm just kidding.

GEN. JONES: Of course.

Q I would have said yes, it would have taken years. I have a direct follow up question to what you just said about how you can't put a time frame on the bureaucratic and administrative development.

You have mentioned that one of the holdups to that is -- are the competing sort of political parties that may have appointees within the ministry kind of butting heads, or not quite gelling together. And then I've also heard that there is a lot of turnover.

So what is sort of -- with those two factors in mind, you know, are you making -- can you make progress with those two factors in mind, that people are



turning over, and appointees are unwilling to maybe hesitant to work together? And how big factors are those?

GEN. JONES: Right. Well, first of all, I think the turnover issue has started to stabilize. You know we did have I think it was five governments in four years here, and so obviously that's pretty turbulent. But they've had the same government in place now for I guess a year and a half, so it is stabilizing, and I think you've got the same leadership team -- (inaudible) -- in place in the ministry.

In terms of the competing political elements so to speak, it's something that as you observe you don't really see blatant evidence of the frictions most of the time. What you know is, if you had an administration, let's say the Department of Defense, instead of having a singular party in the appointed positions, had a Democrat is the secretary and a Republican is the deputy secretary, and a Green party person is the policy person, and a, you know, a communist is the AT&L (ph) guy or something. They could probably figure out how to work together, but there clearly would be some friction.

What I'm seeing in the ministry is that Minister Al-Bulani, who oh by the way is the only -- he's the independent in that group that doesn't have any party affiliations -- he is working in a very cooperative with with the folks that are in the ministry from a number of political backgrounds.

Now that varies from individual to individual. Some of them may be from a particular political party, but not have been an active person in that party. They were just aligned with the party like many people in America are in a political party, but not necessarily; they don't necessarily always take an active role in that.

You have others that have had an active role in politics that are like political appointees that we have that may have been very involved in the political process, and then after the election, assumed a role in an appointed position.

But what I've seen is that, at least at the minister and deputy minister level, the leadership is very well aligned -- often I'll listen to what Mr. Bulani says, and then I will hear one of the deputy ministers in some other form say the exact same words, using the same themes that the minister is using. And I think that is a pretty good sign.

But again one of the things you don't see is in the bowels of the organization I'm sure that there are frictions and so forth that go on that may not be as evident to us but surely have to have an effect on the ability to function efficiently.

Okay.

MODERATOR: All right, anyone else.

Q I've got a follow up -- (inaudible).

MODERATOR: Okay, yeah, we're just about out of time, but go ahead.

Q Quick question: Is there an ability -- I know that there is a number that police officers can call if they are being discriminated against based on sectarian issues -- but is there any kind of confidence in the

inspector general? Is there any confidence that they won't get burned if they go and try to make a claim about what's going on in revealing corruption and those kinds of things?

GEN. JONES: That's a great question. At this point in terms of inspector general, these are relatively new concepts and ideas and so forth for the Iraqi ministry. The inspector general is more focused on inspections and starting to develop a compliance program at this point, although he does investigate complaints of corruption or sectarianism.

How he gets those are from a variety of ways. I'm not sure there is any anonymous that goes straight to the inspector general. They do have a, called a tips hotline that is an anonymous way to call in issues, but not really for internal complaints and that kind of business, although I'm sure there are some that get to the ministry that way.

But right now the inspector general has been doing things like going to detention facilities with unannounced inspections to try to, you know, check and make sure that people are being treated humanely; that there is no torture going on; and that kind of stuff. And then doing certain investigations of allegations of wrongdoing and corruption.

The more mature element is the internal affairs organization. That -- that's been going a little while longer, and a little more robust. Just as an example this year I was talking to General Pada (ph) recently who is the head of that organization. He -- he has done over 5,000 investigations of alleged corruption and wrongdoing and sectarianism. The result of that, something in excess of 2,500 folks either dismissed or punished.

The most recent, two -- week before last was 150 police dismissed for Jaish al-Mahdi related activity. So I think that they are making progress. But I would tell you there is a long way to go before you really have something that is where it is usual to have people who, you know, all know the right procedure on how to make a complaint or something like that; it's more and more normal for the institutions we're used to.

MODERATOR: Okay, all right, sir, thank you very much. And Major General Michael D. Jones, commanding general of the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team in Iraq, thank you very much for being with us today at the Bloggers Roundtable, sir. We really appreciate it, and look forward to speaking to you again.

GEN. JONES: Okay, the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.

MODERATOR: What did I say?

GEN. JONES: Coalition.

MODERATOR: Oh, I'm sorry, yeah, the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team. Sorry about that. I'll get that right.

GEN. JONES: That's okay. And I'd just like to thank everybody that joined us, just say thanks for your interest, and tell you the folks who are over here are true heroes. Something that most people don't know about CPATT is that although I'm the military officer leading it, it's a -- it's U.S. military, the different branches of service. It's also coalition in that we have coalition partners from other countries.

And the largest part of our organization is actually civilian police professionals and other civilians, including from the Department of State and Department of Justice. So it is a great team working very hard in order to try to to assist this ministry, and I hope you all are very proud of the great work that they are doing.

Q I am, General. My brother is going over to Afghanistan in a week to be a police adviser, so.

GEN. JONES: Well, super. He's the kind of guy that we have been very fortunate to have work with us here, and please pass on to him, I wish him my best.

Q Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

GEN. JONES: Okay, thank you all.

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